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Citizen board says colleges, universities must change faster to meet demand

OLYMPIA — In order to meet escalating demand for education, colleges and universities will have to change the way they do business, according to the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). The nine-member citizen board today released its 2000 Master Plan for Higher Education, a four-year strategic plan for higher education required by state law.

According to the HECB Master Plan, at least 70,000 more full-time students will seek higher education by 2010; the state will need to provide enrollment funding for as many as 52,500 of those students. To meet the need of its citizens for education, the 2000 Master Plan places 21st Century learners at the center of higher education decision-making.

“Colleges and universities should do what it takes to help people achieve their education goals,” said Bob Craves, HECB chairman and Costco Senior Vice President. “That means clearing up bottlenecks in admissions and high-demand courses. We have to use technology to make learning more exciting and convenient for students. And our colleges and universities have to squeeze every ounce of learning they can out of the public funds used to pay for it.”

The Master Plan builds five primary goals on a foundation of longstanding support for public investment in affordable access to higher education:

- 1) Focus on student learning:** award certificates and degrees based on what students know and are able to do, instead of on seat-time and credits amassed.
- 2) Link K-12 and higher education:** encourage families to plan — financially and academically — for college, build new connections between the Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program and the Washington Promise Scholarship, and reward collaboration among institutions, kindergarten through graduate school.

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- 3) **Empower higher education consumers:** provide citizens with accessible, understandable, and usable information that helps them make the best use of the range of learning options available.
- 4) **Use e-learning to create opportunity:** bring education to learners, free up traditional classroom space through the use of technology, and use public buildings to the fullest.
- 5) **Help colleges and universities compete:** meet the need for high-demand courses, partner with public and private organizations to enhance opportunity and quality, and reward productivity with greater institutional flexibility to reinvest savings.

New to higher education master plans, the 2000 document estimates costs and savings associated with each goal, and recommends a plan to pay for the proposals. Central to the funding proposal is the notion that everyone will benefit from more opportunity in higher education, so all have a responsibility to help meet the need.

“No one entity can meet the kind of need we’re talking about,” said Marc Gaspard, HECB Executive Director. “Colleges and universities have to be as efficient as possible; students must come to college ready to do college-level work; and business and labor will need to support new partnerships that provide people the kind of education and training this economy demands.”

“Education fuels the engine of the Pacific Northwest economy and prepares our citizens to thrive in this increasingly technological and knowledge-based world,” continued Craves. “Unfortunately, Washington is now a net importer of well-educated people – people who have the education opportunity our citizens do not.”

Increasing the state’s funding for higher education can be accomplished in increments over the next nine years, with about 5,800 new full-time enrollments per year through 2010. The portion of the state budget invested in higher education would have to increase by only 1.5 percent over the next nine years.

Once the Legislature adopts the 2000 Master Plan, it becomes the state’s higher education policy.

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For more information: Whitney DalBalcon, 360.753.7815